Alberta Information and Communications Technology Institute

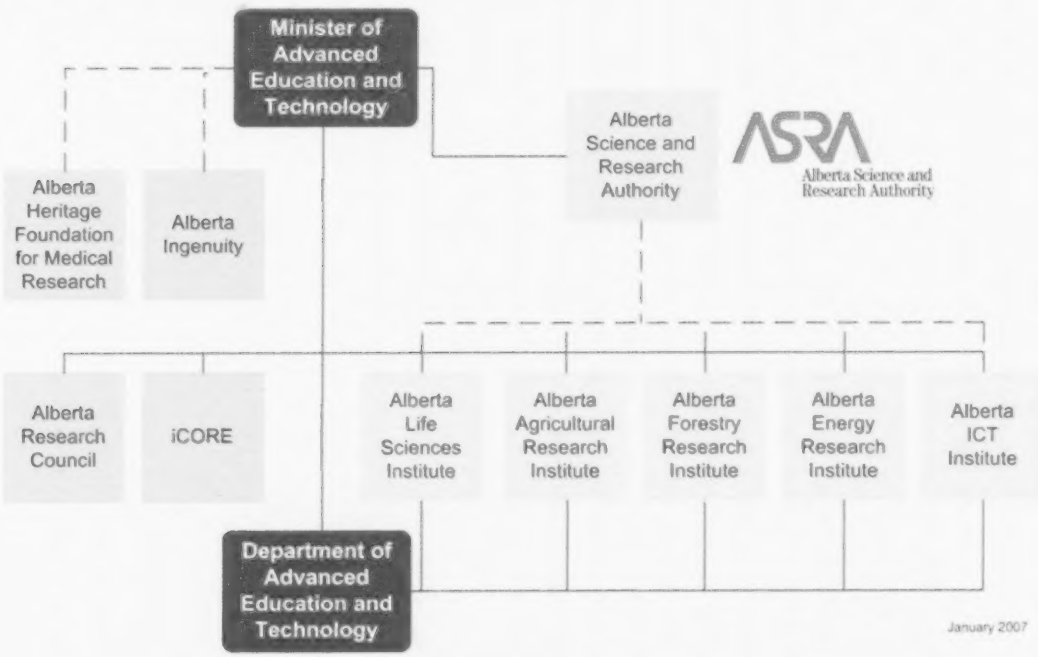
Annual Report 2008-09
A Year in Review

Overview

The Alberta Information and Communications Technology Institute (AICTI) was formed in 2006. It is an unincorporated board established under the *Alberta Science and Research Authority Act*. The Board is comprised of leading academics, scientists and entrepreneurs. AICTI's mandate is to support the development and growth of an information and communications technology (ICT) sector in Alberta by providing strategic advice and policy guidance to government on public funding and investments in ICT-related research and innovation. The Institute works closely with other departments, agencies, and institutions in developing advice on mechanisms to stimulate the development and application or commercialization of new knowledge, technologies and products. The Institute also provides advice to support research capacity, particularly in terms of highly qualified people and research infrastructure.

Over the past several decades, ICT has been a major competitive driver of the global economy. ICT has been fundamental to innovations in a range of knowledge-based fields within Alberta, including energy, life sciences, environment, and education. Building on these existing areas of strength, Alberta has the opportunity to be a world leader in key ICT applications that can be used across many industry sectors.

Organization Chart



AICTI Board 2008-09

Mr. George Rogers, MLA Co-Chair
MLA Leduc-Beaumont-Devon

Dr. Roger Smith, Industry Co-Chair
Alberta Science and Research Authority (ASRA) Board Member
Professor Emeritus and former Vice President (Research), University of Alberta

Dr. Elizabeth Cannon
Dean, Schulich School of Engineering and Professor, Department of Geomatics Engineering, University of Calgary

Dr. Charles Kim
President, Canakor Inc.

Mr. Stephen Lougheed
ASRA Board Member
Chairman, Multiplied Media Corporation

Mr. Brian Olafson
Consultant

Mr. Lorne Olsvik
Councillor, Lac Ste Anne County

Mr. Tom Ogaranko
CEO and Co-Founder, Redengine Inc.

Mr. John Holmlund
CEO, Focus Corporation

Dr. Renee Elio*
Associate VP (Research), Faculty of Science, and Professor, Department of Computing Science, University of Alberta

*Resigned from Board May 2008

Message from the Board

In 2008-09, the Alberta Information and Communications Technology Institute (AICTI) focused on five interrelated areas:

1. Building leading global capacities;
2. Enhancing research capacity;
3. Creating a sustainable infrastructure;
4. Facilitating and accelerating technology commercialization; and
5. Engaging the public and increasing awareness.

The Integrated Resource Management (IRM) initiative continued as a major focus of the AICTI. This initiative is designed to encourage the development of Geomatics and ICT-related tools and applications in order to capitalize on Alberta's strengths in Geomatics, and address larger issues/problems in IRM. To support the IRM Strategy and Business Plan developed last year, a business model was completed for the creation of a Geomatics Product Commercialization Centre for the Energy and Resource Sector. An IRM Centre Implementation Plan was finalized to support the establishment of an IRM Centre as a lead organization which incorporates research excellence, technology commercialization, pilot and demonstration projects, and industry development. The Board is particularly pleased with progress made in IRM due to the commitment of various partners and the support of Advanced Education and Technology (AET) and the AICTI secretariat.

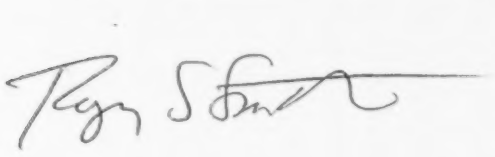
The AICTI Board continued discussions with representatives of small and medium-sized ICT companies (SMEs) to identify problems and opportunities. The Government of Alberta's Task Force on Value Added and Technology Commercialization, with AICTI input, identified actions needed for further commercialization by Alberta companies. The strategic use of government's procurement policies to stimulate the growth of Alberta SMEs is one area on which our Board has focused. To assist, the AICTI launched a Procurement Task Force. A Discussion Paper was completed that highlights actions that the Task Force believes will enhance the goals of the innovation system through the growth of desirable and sustainable jobs in the ICT industry in Alberta.

The AICTI launched a second Task Force in the fall of 2008 focused on broadband for rural Alberta. Opportunities for the delivery of public services in rural Alberta through broadband are considerable as are those for private sector businesses. Rural connections that are "always on" and broadband are required. Tapping this opportunity will bring significant benefits to rural Alberta and open new markets for Alberta's ICT entrepreneurs. The Task Force developed a document summarizing areas of economic, educational and health opportunity, including a set of recommendations.

We wish to recognize the excellent work by the AICTI Secretariat and Advanced Education and Technology in supporting the work of the Board and acting on AICTI advice. This work is documented on the following pages.

We thank our Board of Directors for their strategic insight, direction, and passion over the past year. We also thank our partners in government, academia, and industry who have worked with the AICTI to integrate and align initiatives to ensure maximum benefit for the Province.

As Advanced Education and Technology moves forward with the development and implementation of the *Roles and Mandates Framework for Alberta's Provincially Funded Research and Innovation System*, the AICTI Board continues to provide input on how ICT can best add value and advance the well-being of Albertans.



Roger S. Smith, Ph.D.
Co-Chair

George Rogers, MLA
Co-Chair

Key Activities

During the 2008-2009 fiscal year, with the advice of the AICTI Board, the AICTI Secretariat and Alberta Advanced Education and Technology (AET) took the following steps to strengthen the ICT and related sectors:

- Completed a business model to support the creation of a Geomatics Product Commercialization Centre for the Energy and Resource Sector for the Integrated Resource Management (IRM) initiative. An IRM Centre Implementation Plan was finalized to support the establishment of an IRM Centre to act as a lead organization which incorporates research excellence, technology commercialization, pilot and demonstration, and industry development. The vision for the IRM initiative is to have Alberta recognized as a global leader in providing IRM solutions that add value to activities in energy, forestry, agriculture, environment, and land management and development. AICTI's focus on IRM was instrumental in coordinating this cross government initiative that will impact Alberta's ICT industry and create substantial value to our province's core resource sectors. The IRM initiative has also reached dominant leaders in the resource and technology sectors, bringing three Alberta universities and industry members into a partnership.

- Provided funding through AET of $1.5 million to TRLabs for operational support as part of a five-year funding agreement. TRLabs connects the knowledge and technologies at universities with the innovative needs of industry and trains students to enhance ICT expertise and improve Canada's global competitiveness.

- Partnered with the ICT Council, universities, colleges, and technical institutes to develop and execute a post-secondary attraction campaign specific to the IT industry. Alberta is taking a leadership role to address a North American problem with declining enrolments in computing science.

- Provided sponsorship support to the 32nd Annual Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) International Collegiate Programming Contest World Finals held in Banff. 6,700 teams representing over 1800 universities in 83 countries competed at 213 sites world-wide, with 100 teams advancing to the world finals. The contest fosters creativity and teamwork in building new software programs.

- Provided additional support through AET of $1.5 million to the Informatics Circle of Research Excellence (iCORE) for their Industrial Chair Establishment Grants program to establish Industrial Chairs and associated research teams in ICT at Alberta universities.

- Provided support through AET of $2 million for 2008-09 base operations to Cybera Inc., a non-profit organization with a mandate to provide provincial leadership in integrating, leveraging, and sustaining investments in Cyberinfrastructure (CI) technologies in Alberta.

- Hosted Mr. Jim Geringer, former Governor of Wyoming and Director of Policy and Public Sector, Environmental Systems Research Institute Inc. (ESRI) to share his views to Alberta industry and government on how people, leadership, and technology provide a regional foundation for balancing growth and conservation.

- Worked with other government departments, the Research Institutes, and research and industry organizations to enrich collaboration and alignment on the research and innovation agenda for ICT.

- Provided a list of key recommendations on Broadband Access in rural Alberta to the Minister of AET.

- Held two roundtables for Alberta small to medium sized companies to gain an understanding of these company's activities, capabilities, and obstacles for growth.

- Developed a Procurement Discussion Paper which highlights recommendations to the Government of Alberta that the AICTI Board believes will enhance the goals of the innovation system through the growth of desirable and sustainable jobs in the ICT industry in Alberta.

- Partnered with the Information Technology Management Branch of AET to develop strategies to address current and future challenges for Alberta's information technology market. Two Leadership forums were held resulting in the development of an Action Plan, Implementation Model, and key initiatives to address IT market pressures.

- Developed the ICT Provincial Pilot initiative to provide small to medium sized Alberta-based companies with the opportunity to test and demonstrate their products and services with potential customers in the private or public sectors.

Program Expenditures

In 2008-2009, actual expenditures were $7.65 million directed at three key areas: research and development, infrastructure, and technology commercialization.